United Nations Body Accused of Anti-Israel Bias Launches Teacher Trainings on Antisemitism

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The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), an organization which has received persistent criticism for anti-Israel bias, has partnered with several US-based organizations to launch a new training program aimed at fighting antisemitism and Holocaust denial in schools.

UNESCO, the University of Southern California’s Shoah Foundation, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) are jointly opening the “Shine a Light” online training course to over one million AFT teachers, allowing those who participate to earn professional credits, UNESCO announced earlier this month in a [press release.](https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/fight-against-antisemitism-unesco-and-partners-launch-ambitious-training-programme-american?TSPD_101_R0=080713870fab2000618863681d34ed4f694b72d3db82b99f66ff5e7879234719567d153b5265873b08e4df64ff143000b4e6676780f04cbdda833e6feb2ae993779e26979e17d58148c9126ae9f25dce2ac2aab9e761a4a7a9b5e561b60e0c36)

“Participants will develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence to teach about antisemitism and to dismantle antisemitic stereotypes,” UNESCO said. “They will also learn strategies to address antisemitic incidents in schools, and to respond effectively to conspiracy theories including Holocaust denial and distortion.”

UNESCO added that the training will give teachers access to experts across the world and resources directly from their offices.

“Antisemitism is an attack on our shared humanity. It must be confronted head on, without naivety and with perseverance,” UNESCO director general Audrey Azoulay said on Dec. 15. “This is the commitment of UNESCO, the UN agency mandated to promote education on the Holocaust and the prevention of genocide.”

Azoulay added that UNESCO is “proud to support American teachers to raise young people’s awareness of the nature and impact of this toxic hate speech and ideology that drive discrimination.”

In a statement, AJC called the program “groundbreaking,” noting that it is launching at a time when 90 percent of Americans Jews “believe that antisemitism is a problem in the US.”

“The sooner we educate children about antisemitism the better,” AJC CEO Ted Deutch [said](https://www.ajc.org/news/american-jewish-committee-to-help-lead-effort-to-bolster-antisemitism-education-in-us). “This initiative will provide educators and school principals with the essential tools that they need to teach about antisemitism, dismantle antisemitic stereotypes, and counter prejudices that surface in response to the conflict in the Middle East.”

UNESCO has had a troubled relationship with Israel and the Jewish people. In 2016 its World Heritage Committee passed a resolution, titled “The Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls,” designating holy sites in Jerusalem that excluded Jewish names for the Temple Mount, calling it only the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Later, in 2019, however, it [removed](https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/12/17/unesco-removes-belgium-carnival-with-antisemitic-float-from-heritage-list/) from its List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity a carnival featuring floats that stereotypically caricatured Orthodox Jews with large noses and bags of money around their feet.

Israel is currently not a member of UNESCO after [deciding](https://www.algemeiner.com/2019/01/01/israel-announces-that-it-is-officially-leaving-unesco/), along with the US, to withdraw from the body in 2019.

The United Nations at large is accused of persistent anti-Israel bias. In October, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza (COI) announced that it will investigate the allegation that Israel is an “apartheid state,” with Commissioner Miloon Kothari, who has accused Jews of controlling the media, saying “apartheid itself is a very useful paradigm” for understanding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A [forthcoming vote](https://www.algemeiner.com/2022/12/13/uk-pm-vows-support-for-israel-in-upcoming-united-nations-vote-on-israeli-palestinian-conflict/) in the UN’s General Assembly plenary will decide whether the UN International Court of Justice should issue an advisory ruling on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a step that Israeli UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan has said is “decimating any chances of reconciliation.” A preliminary vote on the measure was [passed](https://www.algemeiner.com/2022/11/13/israel-to-ready-diplomatic-response-to-palestinian-resolution-at-un-as-lapid-warns-about-its-ramifications/) in November at the UN General Assembly Fourth Committee.